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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Protective Wings

Harriet Louise Jerome

It was intensely cold. Houses were covered under a thick layer of snow. Icicles hung in sharp points, waiting to pierce any living creature that dared to venture out. But the streets were empty and deserted. No human or animal dared to go outside in the cold. The sparrows had no choice but to hide in cracks and crevices to protect themselves from the freezing cold. The pigeons sought refuge in sheltered corners and huddled as closely as possible. Many birds had frozen to death.



A dozen or more pigeons gathered under the shelter of a house's porch, trying with little success to stay warm. Some sparrows saw the pigeons and flew over to them.

"Dear pigeons," chirped the sparrows, "may we nestle with you? Your bodies look so big and warm." The pigeons looked at the sparrows. "You're almost frozen. The cold of your feathers will make us even colder, and we're already almost frozen," the pigeons said sadly. "But we won't survive this," sobbed the sparrows.

"Neither will we."

"It looks so warm. Your wings are so big and broad, dear pigeons. We're so small and we're so, so cold!" "Come," cooed one of the pigeons. One of the sparrows fluttered shakily over and nestled under the broad, white wing. "Come," cooed another pigeon and offered protection to another sparrow. "Come! Come!", echoed more pigeons until more than half of the pigeons gave protection to a sparrow under their own half-frozen wings.

The other pigeons thought their sisters were crazy. "You're very foolish," they said. "You mean well, but why would you risk your own lives to save these worthless sparrows?" "Oh, they're so small and they're so, so cold," the pigeons replied. "Many of us will die tonight. Let's share what little warmth we have left with our fellow birds in bitter need."

The night got colder and the sun went down. The wind blew around the house

where the pigeons and sparrows were waiting for death. An hour after sunset, a man came running to the house. As the heavy door closed behind him, a little child looking out the window saw something fall from the porch onto the floor. "Oh, Papa," the girl cried in surprise, "a poor frozen pigeon has fallen on our porch!"

The father went outside to pick up the fallen pigeon. There, he saw the other pigeons under the porch. They couldn't move anymore. The father picked up the pigeons one by one and brought them inside where it was warm, and some slowly came back to life. More than half of the pigeons were soon able to lift their stiff wings again. Then, under the wings of each revived pigeon, a sparrow appeared.

"Look, Papa!" the child exclaimed. "Every pigeon that came back to life is carrying a little sparrow close to its heart." The father and child looked under the wings of the pigeons that hadn't made it. None of them had a sparrow under their wings.

The wind blew cold and fierce outside, but every pigeon that had mercifully taken a sparrow under its own trembling wings for protection could rejoice in the joyful sunshine of the days to come.



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